



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 6102.0 - Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2001

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### INTRODUCTION

14.1 From its inception, the ILO recognised the importance of establishing an adequate statistical basis for the measurement and analysis of risks inherent in employment, and has made recommendations on the concepts associated with those statistics in the first, sixth, tenth, thirteenth and sixteenth (1998) ICLS. Recommendations of the sixteenth ICLS are described in this chapter along with measures of occupational injuries and diseases available for Australia.

### CONCEPTS AND INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES

14.2 ICLS 1998 defined an occupational injury as "any personal injury, disease or death resulting from an occupational accident". An occupational disease was defined as "a disease contracted as a result of an exposure over a period of time to risk factors arising from work activity". The following terms, used when measuring the nature and incidence of occupational injuries, were also defined:

- occupational accident - an unexpected and unplanned occurrence, including acts of violence, arising out of or in connection with work, which results in one or more workers incurring a personal injury or death;
- commuting accident - an accident resulting in death or injury which occurs on the habitual route, in either direction, between the place of work or work-related training and: (1) the worker's residence; (2) the place where the worker usually takes meals; or (3) the place where the worker usually receives remuneration; and
- incapacity for work - arising from an occupational injury, the inability of a worker to perform the normal duties or tasks of the job occupied at the time of the accident.

14.3 ICLS 1998 made recommendations in relation to the coverage of statistics on occupational injuries and the types of information countries should aim to collect. Where practical, countries should aim to cover all occupational injuries as defined above, including non-fatal injuries causing an absence of work of at least one day, excluding the day of the accident, and fatal injuries. The statistics should cover all workers regardless of their status in employment (for example, employees, employers and own-account workers) as well as child workers, informal sector workers and homeworkers.

14.4 The measurement unit recommended to be used for statistics on the nature and incidence of occupational injuries should be the 'case of occupational injury'. If a person is injured in more than one occupational accident during the reference period, each case of injury to that person should be separately counted. The types of information ICLS 1998 recommended that countries aim to collect include information about: the enterprise, establishment or local unit; the person injured; the injury; and the accident and its circumstances.

## **DEFINITIONS USED IN AUSTRALIAN COLLECTIONS**

14.5 In Australia, data on occupational injuries and diseases are principally compiled from administrative records of Commonwealth, State and Territory compensation authorities by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC). The description of NOHSC below is followed by discussion of the data it collects. Also discussed below are ABS measures of occupational injury and disease.

### **NOHSC NATIONAL DATA SET FOR COMPENSATION-BASED STATISTICS**

14.6 The NOHSC was established by the Commonwealth Government to lead and coordinate national efforts to prevent or reduce the incidence and severity of occupational injury and disease. Among its priorities has been the provision of comprehensive and accurate national data on occupational health and safety.

14.7 In April 1987 the first version of the National Data Set (NDS) for Compensation-based Statistics was endorsed by NOHSC. Its primary purpose is to enable the production of national and nationally comparable workers' compensation-based data. Compensation-based data for the NDS have been supplied to NOHSC by State, Territory and Commonwealth workers' compensation agencies each year from 1991-92 onwards.

14.8 A review of the NDS, which addressed the scope, definitional and classificatory issues that had arisen since its implementation, was completed in May 1999. The second edition of the NDS was implemented in State, Territory and Commonwealth workers' compensation systems from 1 July 2000.

14.9 Definitions of occupational injuries and occupational diseases used in the NDS are consistent with international standards.

- Occupational injuries are defined as all employment-related injuries which are the result of a single traumatic event occurring while a person is on duty or during a recess period and where there was a short or non-existent latency period. This includes injuries which are the result of a single exposure to an agent(s) causing an acute toxic effect.
- Occupational diseases are defined as all employment-related diseases which result from repeated or long-term exposure to an agent(s) or event(s) or which are the result of a single traumatic event where there was a long latency period (for example, the development of hepatitis following a single exposure to the infection).

14.10 The NDS coverage of workers' compensation claims is consistent with international standards except for:

- occupational injuries of the self-employed (note: the definition of self-employed workers varies across jurisdictions and is not necessarily consistent with ABS definitions);
- occurrences covered under separate legislation for specific groups of workers;
- occurrences where the workers' compensation claims are pending, in dispute, withdrawn or rejected; and
- occurrences not claimed as workers' compensation.

14.11 The type and level of detail of the information to be collected for each claim is consistent with international standards and include:

- employer description - both in terms of industry and size;
- employee characteristics - date of birth and sex;
- job characteristics - occupation, duty status (e.g. at work, commuting, away from work), and number of hours usually worked each week;
- occurrence details - date of occurrence/report, nature of injury/disease, bodily location of injury/disease, mechanism of injury/disease, agency of injury/disease, breakdown agency; and
- outcome of incident - time lost, severity indicator, payments made.

## **ABS SURVEYS**

14.12 Measures of the incidence of occupational injury and disease are also available from the following ABS household surveys: the supplementary survey to the Labour Force Survey, the Work-Related Injuries Survey; and the Special Social Surveys, the Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation, and the National Health Survey.

14.13 While the terminology used in these surveys ('work-related injuries') differs from that used in the international standards, the underlying definitions are broadly consistent with those recommended by the ICLS. However, the ABS has not sought to distinguish between 'work-related illnesses', 'work-related injuries' or 'work-related injuries sustained on journeys to or from work'. Instead the ABS broadly defines work-related injuries as illnesses or injuries sustained as a result of work activities, or on a journey to or from work, or aggravation of pre-existing conditions where employment was a contributory factor.

14.14 The coverage of ABS surveys of work-related injuries is broader than for the NOHSC dataset outlined above and includes:

- injuries sustained by all categories of employed workers;
- injuries that have been claimed under workers' compensation; and
- injuries that have not been claimed under workers' compensation.

14.15 The coverage of work-related injuries by these surveys is consistent with international standards except for:

- work-related illnesses or injuries resulting in death;
- general scope exclusions relating to ABS household surveys as outlined in Chapter 17; and
- specific scope exclusions of each survey:
  - the Work-Related Injuries Survey collects information about injuries sustained by persons who worked at some time during the previous 12 months;
  - the Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation collects

information from persons who are currently employed about injuries sustained over the previous 12 months; and

- the National Health Survey collects information about recent illnesses and long term conditions (and whether they are work-related) of all persons.

14.16 The type of information collected about work-related injuries by the ABS surveys is generally consistent with international standards and is similar to the type of data available from the NOHSC dataset. The level of detail available from the ABS surveys, particularly in relation to injury occurrences and outcomes, is generally much lower than that available from the NOHSC dataset.

14.17 As recommended in the international standards, all three surveys collect detailed information on employee, job and employer characteristics. In addition, the National Health Survey collects details of occurrences (including place of accident/incident, method received accident/incident, and type of illness/injury), and both the Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation and the Work-Related Injuries Survey collect some information on outcomes of work-related injuries. Information collected on outcomes of work-related injuries includes:

- Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation - days or shifts absent related to (most recent) work related injury or illness; and
- Work-Related Injuries Survey - days or shifts absent related to (most recent) work-related injury or illness; sources of financial assistance; and whether applied for workers' compensation and, if not, reasons for not doing so.

## DATA SOURCES

14.18 As discussed above, statistics on occupational injuries and disease are primarily available from:

- the National Data Set for Compensation-based Statistics - for more information on the objectives and uses of the national data set, concepts and methods for collecting data, and contents of the dataset, see: **National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, National Data Set for Compensation-based Statistics, Second Edition, May 1999**. This publication is available on the NOHSC website ([www.nohsc.gov.au](http://www.nohsc.gov.au));
- the Work-Related Injuries Survey - for more information on survey content and methodology see Chapter 20 Section 15;
- the Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation - for more information on survey content and methodology see Chapter 21; and
- National Health Survey - for more information on survey content and methodology see **1995 National Health Survey Users Guide** (Cat. no. 4363.0).

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